

Complaints Policy

Aims of the Complaints Policy

- To ensure that members and others have the right to complain about the provision, or non-provision, of services through an accessible, confidential, and easy to use procedure which offers rapid action and response.
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and fairly, even where complaints outcomes are not to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- To ensure that complaints are taken seriously and used positively to improve the operation of Hamwic Housing Co-operative.
- To ensure that the complaints procedure complies with [the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#) and with [the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#).

Welcoming Complaints

- 1 Hamwic welcomes complaints from its members and encourage anyone using or directly affected by its services to make complaints. A member does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as a complaint.
- 2 Hamwic will also accept complaints from agencies and others representing complainants (although the Co-operative will need to have written evidence that anyone representing a complainant is authorised by the complainant to act on their behalf). Hamwic will usually allow such representatives to attend meetings with the complainant if the complainant wishes them to.
- 3 A complainant could also be anyone who is affected by a decision or action taken by Hamwic, including:
 - any non-member service users and ex-service users;
 - applicants for housing;
 - partnership organisations and agencies;
 - contractors or consultants;
 - neighbours to co-operative properties;
 - other members of the public.

What Is A Complaint?

- 4 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Hamwic Housing Co-operative, by any of Hamwic's service providers, or by others acting on its behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members.
- 5 A complaint, whether justified or not, may be about something that Hamwic should or should not have done, has done badly, or has done or not done in accordance with its policies. A complaint may also be about a complainant feeling that they have been treated unfairly, or they have been discriminated against in the provision of a service.
- 6 Hamwic will accept and act on complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 7 The following would not usually be considered through Hamwic's complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to consider them:
 - requests for a particular service (e.g. a complaint about a repair or something else prior to it being requested through the relevant working group);
 - requests to deal with an anti-social behaviour or harassment issue or Neighbour Nuisance or Neighbour Disputes prior to this being requested via the relevant working group, which should be dealt with in accordance with relevant policies. If a complainant has asked the Co-operative to address an anti-social behaviour issue, neighbour nuisance or a neighbour dispute and is not happy with the way that the Co-operative has managed it, they may then make a complaint under the Complaints Policy;
 - new issues that arise during a complaints investigation unless they are relevant to the complaint under investigation;
 - anonymous complaints;
 - matters that relate to legal proceedings that have started;
 - complaints about something more than twelve months old;
 - matters that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy;
 - issues relating to how Hamwic is governed which need to be dealt with through the Co-operative's Code of Conduct.

If Hamwic chooses not to receive a complaint for one of the above reasons, it will formally write to the complainant setting out its reasons why.

Receiving Complaints

- 8 Hamwic provides multiple ways that members can make complaints - by phone, by letter, by email, through speaking to someone who represents the Co-operative, or by other means.
- 9 Hamwic will maintain confidentiality in the handling of complaints to those managing them. Every appropriate effort will be made to resolve complaints straight away and without escalation to the formal process. Emphasis will be placed on correcting any service that has failed.
- 10 Hamwic will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may will adapt our normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual member's needs.

Who Will Manage Complaints?

- 11 Hamwic will designate someone (or more than one person) to be a Grievance Officer. The Grievance Officer (or those they delegate) are responsible for handling complaints. The Grievance Officer is a member of the governing body and is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). Individuals managing complaints should be independent of the complaint being managed. Individuals managing complaints will take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman.
- 12 Grievance Officers (or those they delegate) should be competent, empathetic and efficient. They should be able to act sensitively and fairly; should be able to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset members; should have access to individuals in the co-operative at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints. Wherever possible, they will have the authority in the Co-operative to make decisions to resolve the complaint, although it is often the case that complaints are complex and refer to matters that are not covered by Co-operative policies and therefore may require consideration by other officers or the General Meeting.
- 13 Grievance Officers should take responsibility for ensuring that receipt of the complaint is acknowledged; that an investigation of the complaint takes place; and that there is communication with the complainant throughout and regarding outcomes.

Complaints Procedure Outline

- 14 Hamwic will manage complaints as follows:
 - Acknowledgement and logging: complaints will be acknowledged and logged when received;
 - Confirmation of the complaint: Hamwic will confirm the details of the complaint in writing/email to the complainant. The Co-operative encourages complainants to be specific about what they are complaining about and what outcomes they are seeking from the Co-operative;

- Investigation: Grievance Officers or those they delegate investigating a complaint will be independent to the complaint – giving the complainant and any other parties to the complaint the opportunity to state their views on the subject matter of the complaint. Matters that are easily resolvable in the complaint should be addressed as soon as possible;
- Decision-making: Grievance Officers (or the General Meeting in some cases) need to decide their approach to resolution of the complaint and this should be communicated to the complainant;
- Review: if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a review. This should be heard by someone independent of the complaint so far – offering the complainant and other parties to the complaint the opportunity to put forward their views. The complainant does not have to give a reason why they are dissatisfied with the response they received at the first stage of the procedure. The outcome of the review should be communicated to the complainant, and this concludes Hamwic’s complaints procedure;

15 Hamwic sets the following maximum target times for the Complaints Procedure:

Complaints procedure	Timescales
Acknowledgement of the complaint	One week or 5 working days
Results of the investigation of a complaint	Two weeks or 10 working days from receipt of the complaint
Results of a subsequent review of a complaint	Four weeks or 20 working days from the request for a review

- 16 If it is not possible for Hamwic to achieve these timescales, the Co-operative should communicate how much extra time is needed to the complainant and the reasons why there will be a delay. The target times for the investigation and review stages should not be exceeded by more than two weeks or 10 working days without good reason. Details of the Housing Ombudsman will be provided.
- 17 If Hamwic chooses not to either investigate a complaint or to hold a review when asked, it needs to be clear about its reasons why it is not so doing, and these reasons need to be communicated to the complainant.

Communications

- 18 Hamwic will make our complaints policy available in a clear and accessible format for members via induction documents, rules documents, online and as part of regular correspondence with members. Hamwic will provide copies of the complaints policy to members on request. The complaints policy, along with a

annual complaints performance and service improvement report, should be easily found and download able on Hamwic's website.

- 19 As a Registered Provider, Hamwic will provide members with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of their regular correspondence with members. Hamwic members can access the Housing Ombudsman Service when they wish to and not just when they have exhausted the co-operative's complaints process, and the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist members throughout the life of a complaint.
- 20 When communicating with members about complaints, Hamwic will use plain language. The Co-operative will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 21 At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) Hamwic will write to the member to say:
 - what the outcome of their complaint is;
 - the reasons why decisions have been made;
 - what offers Hamwic is making to put things right;
 - what actions remain outstanding;
 - how the complainant can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or what Hamwic is offering;
 - that the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 22 During the complaint investigation and in any review, members should be given a fair opportunity to set out their views, and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.
- 23 Hamwic will keep complainants regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.

Housing Ombudsman Service

- 24 As Hamwic is a Registered Provider, if a member remains dissatisfied at the end of the co-operative's complaints procedure, they may bring their complaint to the Ombudsman. Hamwic will co-operate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 3 weeks or 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the Co-operative will provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date with the co-operative.

Keeping Records

- 25 Hamwic will document all informal and formal complaints and their follow through and will keep copies of all complaint correspondence to and from the complainant. This information will be stored in line with the GDPR policy. The Grievance Officer or those they may delegate should be responsible for ensuring that outcomes to complaints are implemented.

Learning From Complaints

- 26 All members of Hamwic Housing Co-operative are to be updated on all complaints on a monthly basis by the Grievance Officer at the General Meeting.
- 27 All members discuss issues, trends and solutions for complaints. These discussions should focus on positive improvements to service in the future.

Last reviewed: 24/1/25